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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 000093

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS  
NOFORN  
WHA/MEX DIRECTOR EDWARD LEE  
HERMOSILLO CONSUL GENERAL JOHN BREINDENSTINE  
NOGALES CONSUL GENERAL JOHN DINKELMAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MX](#) [PINR](#) [KCOR](#)  
SUBJECT: SONORA, MX - UNHOLY TRUCE AT THE BREAKING POINT?

REF: HERMOSILLO 299; MEXICO 3573

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DERIVED FROM: DSCG 05-1 (B), (D)

1. (C) Summary: With the July 5 election of Guillermo Padres (PAN), the PRI lost control of the governorship of Sonora for the first time in almost a century. However, continued PRI control of the State Assembly will limit significant change. Padres brought in a whole new cabinet, sparing only State Attorney General Abel Murrieta Gutierrez, who boasted an impressive record in keeping cartel violence in check despite persistent rumors of ties to organized crime. With the pull-out of 500 key federal police units in September and a more recent leadership vacuum in one of several rival cartels vying for control of the lucrative cross border criminal activity, growing cartel violence will likely increase absent a swift and coordinated response by state and federal law enforcement officials. End summary.

Unclear If Historic Election Will Bring Change

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2. (C) In late 2009, meetings with representatives of Sonora's State Commission of Human Rights, the press, the PRI and PAN, Consulate Hermosillo law enforcement agencies, and state NGOs. Poloffs were briefed that Governor Padres made promises that he will not likely fulfill, such as free university scholarships for all students and free meals to the needy. As the first non-PRI governor in over 80 years, the public views Padres as a welcome change from the establishment. State observers considered Padres a longshot to win, but the PRI ran a weak campaign and responded poorly to the tragic June 5 fire in a public day-care that killed 49 children. Absent the headline grabbing fire, most observers do not believe Padres would have won.

Previous Governor and PRI...Lingering Forces in State

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13. (C) While last summer's day-care fire hurt his popularity, former Governor Bours remains a powerful force behind the scenes of Sonoran PRI politics. The PRI retains a majority in the state Assembly through an alliance with the Nueva Alianza and Green parties. Unless that alliance falls apart (which some analysts predict by spring 2010), Padres will have to negotiate with the PRI in order to move any new legislation through the Assembly. Similarly, Bours will continue to play a hand in the state's affairs.

Head of Security... Managing Security, But Tied to Crime?

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14. (S/NF) The only figure from Bours' cabinet that new Governor Padres did not replace was State Attorney General Abel Murrieta. Lourdes Lugo, Director of Sonoran newspaper "El Imparcial," told Poloff the Governor is widely believed to have kept Murietta on in view of his relative success keeping violence in Sonora in check. The Director of Sonora's daily "Primera Plana," Francisco Quirrin, informed Poloff that Governor Padres had told him that he had retained Murrieta because former PGR Attorney General Medina Mora recommended him as honest and uncorrupted. However, a Consulate contact who worked directly with former state police chief Juan

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Manuel Pavon Felix, asserted that the relative security under Murrieta could be the result of a deal with the Sinaloan cartel in which the cartel keeps a lid on violence provided the police do not interfere with its key drug and migrant operations. This individual also alleges that, during the previous administration, Bours either sanctioned Murrieta's ties to the Sinaloans or was himself in contact with cartel officials.

Cartel Dynamics

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15. (C/NF) An unholy truce between two of the largest cartels in Northern Mexico, Beltran Leyva and Guzman Loera, holds violence at bay along the railroad tracks in Nogales, Sonora which skirts the U.S. border. Late last year, these organizations struggled for control of Nogales until both concluded that they were losing too much money and too many men to the war, settling on the division of Nogales. Outside Nogales, the Sinaloa, Gulf, and Zeta cartels continue fighting for drug territory in the rest of the state of Sonora.

The Police Return?

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16. (S/NF) In November of 2008, the Secretariat for Public Security (SSP) assigned 500 members of the rotating federal police to Sonora, concentrating on Nogales. According to representatives from Consulate Hermosillo, this federal unit was more effective and more trustworthy than other federal, state, or municipal police. Additionally, the unit's open presence, particularly in Nogales, quelled the cartels' willingness to assault innocent civilians or launch attacks on each other. The officers' frequent rotations left them less familiar with local residents, resulting in fewer opportunities for police corruption or threats by the cartels. In

contrast, state police are often slow to act against organized crime and are susceptible to cartel threats against family members or bribes.

17. (S/NF) In September 2009, SSP pulled this federal unit out of Nogales. Since that time, the Beltran-Guzman railroad truce has become less stable. Low-ranking members have made flash attacks into other cartels' territory, sometimes killing members of the other factions. Compared to Ciudad Juarez, the death count is relatively low, but has increased since October. Several interlocutors speculated that the rate of violence will increase, and that the cartels' conflict could spread much further south into the state and along the border, impacting civilians. The death of Arturo Beltran Leyva in a successful December 18 Mexican Navy Operation, and the subsequent arrest of his brother Carlos on January 3, will likely produce internal struggles in ABL and new opportunities for Beltran Leyva's rivals that will increase the violence further.

18. (C) Rumors have circulated in Sonora that President Calderon or SSP Head Garcia Luna will re-deploy federal police. The Consul General has approached the Sonora Attorney General, the Head of Public Security, and the head of the local military brigade to inquire if they know why SSP removed the unit and if it could be reassigned to Sonora. On January 4, Sonora papers reported that Governor Padres had asked SSP to send 1,000 federal police to the state following recent violence in Nogales and Ciudad Obregon (Ref

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A). The deputy SSP federal commander told the ConGen that a contingent of 500 federal police would arrive as soon as SSP completes construction on a barracks compound in Hermosillo. General Trevino, the head of the SSP Federal Police in Sonora, told ConGen that this compound "should" be completed by March. Trevino also told ConGen that police contingents will center in Nogales, Hermosillo, and Ciudad Obregon. As of January 26, 150 SSP agents had already arrived in Nogales, 50 in Hermosillo, and 100 in Obregon.

Rescue and Analysis

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19. (SBU) Today, Sonora is one of the pilot states for the C-4 (control, command, communication, and computer center), the national network of emergency response lines, and Plataforma Mexico, the central intelligence database under development by the GOM. As such, Sonora C-4 staff collects formal complaints and tips from the public through a telephone hotline and gathers reports from radio and television. The C-4 collects the complaints in a database, which analysts then review in an effort to make connections between intelligence received through tips, public sources, information from participating GOM agencies, and security cameras. The staff sends the database output to Plataforma Mexico, and passes it to the army, federal police (SSP), and PGR.

110. (C) Governor Padres appointed new leadership for the institution, and the new managers had been installed only two days before PolOff's visit. Representatives from fire and rescue units, federal SSP, state police, PGR, and SEDENA sit in a task force room, with access to screens capable of displaying an image of a single crime or a rescue scene as well as scrolling among the more than 100 public and private security cameras in Sonora.

¶11. (S) Comment: The recent ABL takedown creates a leadership vacuum in this cartel and increases prospects for rising levels of violence as the Gulf or Sinaloa Cartels seek control over trafficking in the region. We are encouraged that the government is looking seriously at reinserting federal police in Sonora, given the apparent contribution they made to security when they were last deployed there. Clearly, the federal government faces resource constraints in view of its deployment of over 2,000 federal police to Ciudad Juarez and will need to consider carefully how many more federal police it can free up for deployment to Sonora. In the end, the federal police will need to coordinate closely with the state police to establish a strong presence and develop the kinds of leads necessary to undertake effective operations. End comment.  
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